

## CLEEK OF SCOTLAND YARD

BY  
T. W. HanshawThe Mystery of the  
Sealed Art Gallery

"Here's Croydon at last! I'll have to hurry. And another few minutes should give us the inestimable pleasure of Mr. Nikolai Paravetch's society and acquaintance."

Another five minutes did give him the inestimable pleasure, and another still greater pleasure also, for even as he entered the room, he found himself in the company of the woman dearest to him on earth, and for the minute he could scarcely believe his own eyes.

She was seated near Mrs. Paravetch, whose handsome face was lined with grief and furrowed with an unutterable sorrow. And for a brief second he hesitated, uncertain how to act, but Alisa, who had recognized him in "George Headland's" personality, rose with uncontrolled pleasure shining from her eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Headland," she murmured, extending a hand to him in greeting. "I am so glad you have come. I was only saying to Mrs. Paravetch this morning, if Mr. Narkom could only put you upon the case."

Cleek flashed her a glance of grateful admiration for this quick-wittedness, and pressed her hand gratefully.

The whole party welcomed the sudden entry of a dark, thick-set young man of about twenty-five, and it did not need

Cleek touched up his head to listen, and through the silence which followed he could hear the persistent tap, tap, of a stick along the passage outside.

"Blind," he said, quietly, with a quick look at Alisa. She bowed her head, and Nikolai, with a sudden welcoming smile, overspread his saddened face, fairly ran to the door and threw it open.

"Here we are, dear lady, here we are!" he cried, his voice thrilling with a great warmth, a great affection. The tapping stick came nearer, and even as he listened Cleek saw a slim, fair-haired, smooth-shaven fellow, whose closed eyes gave silent token to the sorrow with which he lived, enter the room.

"Nikolai, haven't they found him—is there no news?" asked this gentleman, in tones of singular sweetness.

"None at present, cousin, but these gentlemen, Mr. Headland and Mr. Narkom, are here to find out."

Cleek thrust up a silencing hand.

"What I want to see is the room where the losses have taken place," he said.

Nikolai sprang to his feet.

"Come, then," said he, wondering at the callousness that was in Cleek's voice, and led the way from the room, while the superintendent and Mrs. Paravetch followed him. Mrs. Paravetch sank down

writing stopped, and it was there that the pencil had obviously fallen from his hand. But what had become of the man? How he had vanished from that room was an everlasting mystery.

Cleek's face became an utter blank. "Quite right to treasure it, Mr. Paravetch, but it isn't much use to the Yard. I'm afraid your father was obviously thinking of his flowers—and now, where's the blessed monkey?" He turned upon his heel, and following the direction of Nikolai's finger saw it at the opposite end of the room.

It was a strange thing, uncanny, in that it was an embalmed body of a real monkey of an extremely rare species. Around its neck hung strings of jewels, dangling in wonderful profusion over the furry breast.

"It's funny thing the thief didn't touch the monkey's jewels," said Cleek under his breath. Then he moved a little farther toward the thing and felt at one of the chains with his fingers. "Ah!" said he severely. "Imitation, I see. That alters the face of things considerably."

"Not so much as you think," struck in Nikolai, with a little lift of the chin. "My father would never let an imitation stone enter his collection. These jewels are real, Mr. Headland, absolutely real."

"Oh, all right, I'll come down," Cleek screwed round on his heel, and beckoning to Mr. Narkom, came forth from the room and shut the door behind him, as the figures of the cousins followed.

Outside on the landing, however, he halted. "I say," he blurted out suddenly, "what about the roof—is it possible to get out on the roof? Never thought of that before."

"Quite possible," replied Nikolai, promptly. "You can get up here."

He led the way to another door at the end of the landing, which he opened at the skylight, but there's nothing to be seen up there—unless you want to go."

For answer, Cleek skipped nimbly enough up the narrow iron staircase, and thence on to the flat roof, on which he literally crawled about, like a puppy out for a romp in the sun. Then suddenly he pounced upon something, and sat back upon his heels surveying it.

"See a pin and let it lie," he chuckled. "You'll need a pin, etc., etc., eh? Well, well, I've done my duty, sir, and I'll be taking myself off. I'd like to see this place again at night, and so, Mr. Paravetch, I may come back again."

With which he turned on his heel and plunged down the steps, followed by Mr. Narkom. Down to the avenue where Lennard and the liveried Dollops awaited them.

"Any ideas, old chap?" queried the superintendent, as Cleek whipped out his notebook and was scribbling at a furious rate.

"Several," was the reply. "Just try and find this out for me, dear old chap, and let me alone till 5 o'clock. He thrust the bit of paper into the superintendent's hand, and turning upon his heels he ran and out into a narrow lane running in the opposite direction, while the superintendent, with something akin to disgust in his look, bent his eyes upon the piece of paper that he cupped hand held.

It wanted but two minutes of the hour of 5 and the rays of the sun were losing something of their rosy splendor when Cleek once more approached Clock Manor and was shown into the drawing-room where Mrs. Paravetch sat, a still, grave figure, refusing all comfort, even from Alisa, who sat close beside her holding one hand in hers.

Cleek on Cleek's heels came Mr. Narkom, whose glum face was evidently the outcome of a bitter disappointment.

"Well, my friend, did you find it?" said Cleek with eyes that twinkled somewhat at the worthy superintendent's apparent discomfiture.

"Ah, well, I was a little more fortunate—come with me all of you."

In utter silence they trooped out of the room after him looking at each other and misbelieving as only such people in such circumstances could misbelieve—the staircase, and at the first landing came into contact with Ivan, the blind man, who halted irresolutely at the sound of their footsteps.

Cleek laid a hand upon the man's arm and turned him gently round as though he were on a pivot, and involuntarily he followed them.

Arrived at the top story of the house, Nikolai fitted a key in the lock, and threw open the door of the fateful room. Cleek entered it, making straight for the table upon which the pot of gladioli stood.

"There it is, the beauty," said he, with a little note of elation in his tones. "It's a pity you can't see it for yourself, Mr. Sergievitch, isn't it? It would have saved everybody a good deal of trouble—what's that, Mr. Nikolai? Anything wrong with it? No, indeed, it's been the saving of your fortune, if not the life of your father. See, I'm going to take his advice. I'm going to report, always providing you have no objection."

Too mystified by his words, to prevent him even if they had wanted, Mrs. Paravetch, who sat close beside him, was watching while Cleek plunged his hands into the rich dark mold and pulled forth one after the other—solid, earth-stained, lumps, which proved on investigation to be the missing jewel cases.

"The rings!" gasped Ivan Sergievitch, with almost a sob of surprise, and Cleek gave vent to a little laugh, half snarl, half growl.

"Ah—my friend—none so blind as those who won't see, eh?" he said serenely.

"What's that? No, you're not going to escape now! God as he made a lunatic at the swiftly moving figure of the man that went not toward the door, but to the pedestal of the Hanuman—the 'monkey god'."

"That's right, my friend—try it for yourself, but that door is closed—and there's no kindly balloon to send down its rope and yank you into safety again. You wouldn't? Got him?" by Jupiter, he reached out his trembling old hands.

Came a snarl and a scuffle and the harsh music of snapping handcuffs, then the crash of a falling body thudding to the stone floor and before you could say "Jack Robinson," there stood Cleek, with his chin flung up and his eyes snapping fire, and the writhing, shrieking thing upon the floor that was a man, bearing silent witness to the testimony of his strength.

Nikolai fairly sprang forward and threw himself upon Cleek. "What does this mean, Mr. Headland?" he shouted, brandishing himself with terrified amazement.

"Good heavens! Ivan, not—not blind—I don't know anything wrong—impossible!"

"Not so," replied Cleek, turning gently to him and laying a hand upon his

shoulder. "You are not the first to nurture a viper in your breast, and I was quite certain that he was not blind by the twitching of his eyes at the sunlight blazed on them. That made me think. Then when I found Hanuman, a pneumatic figure on a movable pedestal."

"What?" cried Nikolai—and with one leap was at the base of the monkey's throne.

"Yes," said Cleek, "I soon saw that by this little knob and tube fitted just under the tail to say nothing of feeling the air-stuffed animal for myself. That proved to me that some one had fitted it up so that the deflated skin on the black marble would be invisible, leading the superstitious to believe if they saw this young gentleman in his monkey disguise that it was indeed the god come to life. Of course, it was easy enough to blow it out again with a good bellows afterward. And, added to this, I saw that the solid stone pedestal swings round on a pivot and is partly hollow. When the hollowed out side is against the wall it is easy for a youth of comparatively small stature, such as our amiable friend here, to crawl into it. From that convenient cupboard just outside, and through which, as you see, he has taken away the panel, to conceal himself in the marble—and, hey presto!—round it goes. The treasures and at his mercy, and his blindness made him actually even more against suspicion. But this time I should say he has failed—"

He darted back to the table and opened the cases, disclosing, not a single jewel, but a diamond, but the string of pearls which generally hung round Hanuman's neck.

A sort of groan, half angry, wholly afraid, broke from Sergievitch's lips. "What a fool! He has taken the pearls! He was certainly blind this time, my friend," said he with a little laugh. "All your careful drugging of the cigar and the changed whiskey—all went for nothing."

"Ah, but it's easy to reconstruct what happened that night. I take it that Mr. Paravetch was about as brave a man as is to be met with in London, and he guessed that the thief would be at the bottom of those 'monkey tricks.' Probably it occurred to him that any minute he might be shot at from above—and that that thief could make off with the rings before he could help him, even though he risked breaking his neck for them. Looking all round, he must eventually have thought of burying them in that Majolica pot of earth so that they should be safe, and when the gladioli was repotted—they would turn up. How do I know, Mr. Narkom? Firstly, there were the dried tulip marks on the cigar, where his fingers had obviously held it, and some scattered mold on the floor behind—and Mr. Nikolai's scrap of paper did the rest."

"He must have finished his task and sat down to a cigar—and was only half drugged, by the optimum in it, when round swung our friend Hanuman and his pedestal, and in comes our grateful friend here—"

His voice stopped at a sudden moment pinching up his chin. Then "Quite a tragic little surprise for both parties," he went on quietly, "and I don't suppose it took Mr. Narkom more than a minute to complete the drugging of the man who had done so much for him, for this cushion smelt abominably of chloroform."

But here he could speak further, Mrs. Paravetch had started forward with a little anguish on her face.

"But where is he? Where is my husband?" he bleated, with a little wail of despair.

Cleek's face grew a little grave. "Ah, dear lady," said he gently. "I told you I had not solved all the riddle yet. All I can tell you at present is that the unconscious body was drawn up through that skylight by the aid of an accomplice, and hoisted into a balloon."

"Yes," said the old woman, "I had come down the other side of Cranmer-hurst woods, but absolutely empty, every one swears to that," struck in the superintendent agitatedly, his eyes on Cleek's face.

For a moment that gentleman stood stock still, pinching up his chin, evidently under the stress of some emotion. Then he swooned down upon an ottoman, and despite his frantic struggles, searched the man's pockets, finally uttering a little yelp of delight like a terrier who has found the scent of the rat he is tracking, and then, in an excited tone, he said, "They won't know anything about him now."

But Cleek had swept on till he reached the corner of the room, where he saw a strip of black fur and clad in a leather apron that covered his knees, sat an old man, heedless of the whispered comments of his fellow-workers, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, with his head bent low over his work.

Nikolai gave a sudden cry, broke through the crowd of amazed workers and peered toward the old man with his heart in his thankful eyes.

"Father!"

The old man looked up at the sound of it, smiled in a strangely pained way, and his forehead as though grogged back over the hills of memory for something he could not find, and with a half-stiffed cry, stumbled to his feet, and reached out his trembling old hands.

But Cleek had answered for him. Stepping up to him he laid a gentle hand upon the old man's arm and drew the tired old eyes up toward him. "Quite safe, Mr. Paravetch," said he softly. "Quite safe. How did you come here? Why, you lost your memory, due to an overdose of drugging, but that's all over now, and your instinct carried you straight back to your old work-bench."

"Come, fatherkin," said Nikolai, "we will go back home now. You are tired and weary and will need a long rest."

The old man said nothing, merely followed, like a tired child, his numb fingers still striving to work out the scheme of circumstances.



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the sudden look of adoration that swept over the elder woman's face to tell Cleek that this was her son, Nikolai, of whom Mr. Narkom had spoken.

"Oh, thank God you have come," cried the young man, after the introductions were over and he stood beside Cleek in earnest conversation with him. "Bring him back, Mr. Headland, find him the 'Emperor' matters nothing. It is this horrible, awful suspense that hurts. There is some devil's trick at the bottom of it. We haven't had a lucky day since that confounded 'monkey' entered the place. The man who brought it to my father told him afterward there was a judge of their colossal surprise, when they found the room empty as regards Mr. Paravetch. The key was still in the lock of the door. Not a sign of a struggle or disturbance was there to be seen, but a clean haul made of every thing of value in the place, besides the 'Emperor' itself. Lord only knows what the extent of the loss is yet, Nikolai. To give him his due is more concerned over the loss of his father and trying to comfort his mother."

"Oh, ho! so there's a Mrs. Paravetch, there," commented Cleek, fitting the fingertips of one hand to the fingertips of the other.

"I should think there was—and as clever a woman herself as you would meet in a day's walk," Cleek smiled.

"Hm," he said casually. "Sometimes clever people overreach themselves."

The superintendent fairly snorted.

"Well, dear chap, you'll do the same, if you're thinking of fixing any blame on to Mrs. Paravetch. Well, anyway, that's all I can tell you. You must just see into the matter for yourself. Meanwhile, I only said I would bring a good man down, so—" he paused significantly, and threw out his hands, and Cleek, with a laugh of genuine pleasure, clapped him upon the shoulder.

"Ivan Sergievitch, my cousin," replied Nikolai promptly. "He has nearly gone mad since the disappearance."

Suddenly Alisa lifted a listening finger. "Hark!" said she. "Here he comes."

In her seat and placed a loving hand on the arm of the blind man.

"No, Ivan, stay here," she said softly. "It can do no good to re-enter that room—stay here with me."

The superintendent had said the room was right at the top of the house, with but one large flat glass window in the roof, only part of which would lift up. Cleek looked curiously about him. The little article that appeared incongruous in this temple of beauty was the iron safe, which stood clamped to the wall, and whose door swung idly open, showing its empty state.

"I found it locked," said Nikolai, speaking quickly, as Cleek advanced toward it. "But as I have a duplicate key I was enabled to examine it. It only contained one case of rings, but they were of immense value, and included the great 'Emperor' ring. And all had vanished."

"Yes, so I heard," said Cleek, pausing mechanically at a table standing near, on which was a magnificent majolica tub filled with scarlet gladioli growing freely and forming a glorious spot of color in its somewhat somber surroundings.

Young Nikolai's strained eyes softened slightly. "Next to his jewels, the little father loved his flowers best. His very last thoughts before he fell asleep were of them."

"Before he fell asleep?" snapped Cleek quickly, switching round on his heels and facing the man with keen eyes. "How did you know he fell asleep, eh?"

Nikolai bit his lips confusedly. "Well," he said, with a touch of defiance, "it's what you would expect him to do—but I judged from the way his pen trailed off—see—this piece of paper was under the couch. I kept it because it must have been the last thing he touched. I didn't mention it to any one."

Cleek fairly snatched at the scrap of paper, on which was written by two words, "Repost gladioli—"

There the

"N"UM-BAH six-sixty-four—Major Maltravers, please-six-sixty-four. Numbah six-sixty-four."

Over the crowded coffee-room of the Regent Hotel, the droning voice of the commissionaire, resplendent in the scarlet and gold uniform of London's greatest hotel company, broke in on the clatter of cups and saucers, the striking of wax vestas, and the subdued hum of many voices. It broke in also upon the reverie of a certain tall, fair-haired, fair-mustached gentleman, sitting in one of the sunny bay windows—with the word "military" fairly shrieking from the tips of his patent leather shoes to the crown of his carefully-groomed head.

"Beg pardon, sir, but there's a 'tiger'—I beg pardon—a footman—just handed in this card and says his lordship would be in. If so, would you drive down to the Junior 'Tub in his car, which is waiting outside."

"Yes, on me soul—I might as well finish this dem'd rag at the club as in this den of chattering monkeys," drawled the major, condescendingly, twirling his fair waxed mustache with languid fingers. "All right, commissionaire—I'll join his lordship." And setting to his feet, he was awakened after the equally soldier-like figure of that gentleman out into the grand entrance hall of the Regent Hotel, where he found the afore-said "tiger," in whose eyes shone a double devotion to "Capt. Maltravers' exalted self, while in one of the most comfortable chairs sat a short, stumpy, full-bearded gentleman, whose immaculate clothes and well-ordered figure bore witness to a painful if somewhat misguided desire to achieve the sprightliness of his youth.

"My dear Lord Esenden—a thousand apologies for keeping you waiting," cried the major, bearing down on him and shaking hands heartily. "Suppose you want to discuss the Home Rule bill again—"

"I said you won't convince me, but I came to fight it out with you. Come along, then, to the club, and I'll lunch there, if you'll join me."

"Delighted," said the stout gentleman, allowing the effusive major to link his arm affectionately in his and bear him off to the swinging doors, which were just being pushed round on their pivot to allow of the entry of a man whose bearing was that of the aristocratic gentleman, and whose clothes bore that unmistakably "foreign" look that betokens the upper classes in other lands.

At the sight of him, Lord Esenden clutched at the major's arm with painful intensity and went a little pale under his ruddy tan.

Once outside on the steps, the pair walked quietly down till the "tiger" had darted to the door of the elegantly cornered limousine, and throwing it open, saw his lordship and his guest encoined in their seats, then mounting the driver's seat, beside a resplendent chauffeur, folded his arms with an aristocratic calm that was decidedly comical to those who knew Dollops, and once the limousine had swung into the crowded thoroughfare of Park Lane, the "major" leaned back with a little laugh of sheer satisfaction and laid a hand upon his companion's arm.

"Bravo, my friend! Bravo!" said he softly.

"Lord Esenden!" twitched up his mouth.

"Good lord, man, didn't you see who that dark man was—just now? No less a personage than Count Irma himself, and the place is literally swarming with French people; and why you want to take up your quarters in the identical hotel with Count Irma, I can't see! It's like putting your hand into the hornet's nest."

Cleek gave vent to a curious little laugh.

"It's a case, I presume," he ventured. Mr. Narkom fairly jumped.

"A case? I should say it was a case!" asserted he, with some show of excitement. "And the devil himself's at the bottom of it."

"Well, let's have it—all the facts as quick as you like—I presume you know, or rather Lennard does, where you are taking me for it's more than I do, save —" Cleek's eyes darted to the window and back again. "That it's out of town somewhere."

Mr. Narkom smiled.

"It's out beyond Croydon way—Dorley Oaks, to be exact—and how the devil the thing's been done looks like to me a cocked hat. Burmese idols don't come to life, especially if they're embalmed monkeys into the bargain, and besides, what has become of the man himself?"

"Hm I see—it isn't murder, then, this time."

"Not unless the dead body has been found by the time we reach the Clock Manor."

"Public house?" threw in Cleek, lighting his cigarette.

"Cinnamon, no!" ejaculated the superintendent. "Biggest house in the district, stands in its own grounds, and has a special clock on its turret—it belongs to a Mr. Paravetch."

Cleek's head went up and his brows came down, and he sat a moment thinking. "Paravetch—Russian," he muttered, pinching up his chin reflectively. "Russians—jewelry—jewelry—rings—Paravetch—got it?" he cried, with a jump that nearly rolled Mr. Narkom off his seat. "Wasn't there a Mr. Paravetch—Anton Paravetch, I think, a Russian furrier, with money, who bought a ring at Christie's the other day—constituting one colossal diamond—called the 'Emperor'—and paid something like five thousand pounds for it—if my memory serves me right? Any relation to that individual?"

"The man himself?" threw in the superintendent. "A regular encyclopedia you are, Cleek, and no mistake."

"Well go on, don't tell me anything has happened to the 'Emperor' or its fur-dealing owner."

"That's just it—he's disappeared—he and the ring, too," bleated Mr. Narkom, in a very ecstasy of professional interest. Cleek smoked a moment in silence, then he turned abruptly to the superintendent.

"When did you come into this?" he queried sharply.

"Yesterday morning."

"An ordinary burglary?"

"No, indeed—an extraordinary series of burglaries. You see, Mr. Paravetch is a furrier by trade, and an art collector by hobby, and Clock Manor holds some of the most wonderful art treasures outside of a museum. Among them is an embalmed body of Hanuman, the monkey god, said to be of fabulous value, as it was brought straight from his temple."

"Has Mr. Paravetch been to India himself?" interposed Cleek, puffing deeply at his cigarette.

"Yes—all over the world, I should say. Well, during the last six weeks, Mr. Paravetch has missed one or two small jewels—quite valuable enough to make their loss worth mentioning, only, as far as I can see, he was afraid of being held up to ridicule in the daily press."

"Hidde—how, my friend? Why should a burglary be a source of amusement?"

"Yes, but you see, dear old chap, he will have it that the monkey god has taken them."

"Oh, rubbish! Tell that to the marines—if that's his idea—a stuffed monkey getting up in the night to steal things of no earthly use to him if he were alive. I don't wonder the good gentleman is afraid of being laughed at."

The superintendent nodded gravely. "Exactly as I thought; only the thing, whatever it is, has been heard walking about at night, and now two nights ago it was seen by one of the maids."

"Oh, ho!" cried Cleek, in two different tones, "that's a horse of a different color. This sounds interesting—what happened then?"

"Oh, she faints, and by the time the other servants had rushed up and succeeded in reviving her, when they did bethink themselves of looking to see whether the blessed monkey was still on its perch, so to speak, of course there was nothing to see."

"Nothing been stolen, either, I suppose?"

"No—apparently the burglar—for I take it to be a burglar—was surprised by the girl's entry, but how or where beats me. The girl herself will have it that it was the monkey god himself, tall and bristles and all, and that the pedestal—which is solid marble, by the way—was empty."

"Marble, eh?" said Cleek, a curious one-sided smile twitching up his mouth. "What color?—but perhaps you don't know—"

"As it happens, I do—it is black, or to be precise, black and green, and green in it—I went right down yesterday and looked over the ground myself—but what's that got to do with it?"

"Just an idle thought of mine," said Cleek severely. "Well, if that's three nights ago since anything happened where does the 'Emperor' diamond come in?"

Mr. Narkom threw up his hands in a very real despair. "It doesn't come in—it's gone out, and so has Mr. Paravetch," said he, sorrowfully. "As I said before, the whole thing is inexplicable! When young Nikolai Paravetch came to me this morning—"

"Hello! Hello! Who's this?" asked Cleek, sitting up very straight in his seat.

"Mr. Paravetch got a son or what?"

"Yes—absolutely devoted to him, as you will see for yourself," said the superintendent. "It seems that after the maid's adventure Tuesday night, young Nikolai watched and caught only a remarkably bad cold. Wednesday night it was Mr. Paravetch's turn, and after he and the young man had searched the gallery to be perfectly sure there was no one concealed in the room, Nikolai retired to his own bed. Old Paravetch locked himself in, and we presume made himself as comfortable as possible for the night."

"What about the windows—they were covered, I suppose?"

"Well, there's only one, and that has a flat roller blind, but only part of it will open, that is, the other part is just flat glass in the roof—the gallery is built for a studio. Hello!—what's the matter?"

"Cleek had switched round in his seat and was staring fixedly at him.

"Nothing—but that alters things considerably to my mind—but so on—go on—"

"God knows," was the emphatic reply. "All Nikolai could tell me was that when 8 o'clock came, and Mr. Paravetch had made no sign, the young man went up to the gallery and knocked and knocked, and at last, getting no reply, called the man servant and the chauffeur, and together they battered down the door. Judge of their colossal surprise, when they found the room empty as regards Mr. Paravetch! The key was still in the lock of the door. Not a sign of a struggle or disturbance was there to be seen, but a clean haul made of every thing of value in the place, besides the 'Emperor' itself. Lord only knows what the extent of the loss is yet, Nikolai. To give him his due is more concerned over the loss of his father and trying to comfort his mother."

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